

**Devotional Thoughts :: JULY 8 - THOUGHTS BY WILLIAM MACDONALD**

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“...they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.” (Song of Solomon 1:6b)

The brothers of the Shulamite maiden had sent her to work in the vineyard. She kept so busy tending the vines that she neglected her own vineyard, that is, her personal appearance. Her skin had become swarthy and dried, and no doubt her hair was unkempt.

There is always the danger of neglecting our own vineyard by becoming overly occupied with someone else's. There is the peril, for instance, of becoming so engrossed with the evangelization of the world that one's own family is lost. If God gives us children, those children are our number one mission field. When we stand before the Lord, one of the greatest joys will be to be able to say, “Behold, I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb. 2:13). Not all the accolades from appreciative audiences will compensate for the loss of our own sons and daughters.

It does seem from the Scriptures that responsibility begins at home. After Jesus had driven the demons out of Legion, He charged him, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee” (Mark 5:19). It often seems that the most difficult place to evangelize is in our own backyard, but that is where we should start.

Again when the Lord commissioned His disciples, He said, “...both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Begin in “Jerusalem” (your home base)!

Andrew was determined not to neglect his own vineyard. We read of him, “He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:41).

There are, no doubt, cases where a believer is faithful in seeking to win his loved ones to the Lord Jesus, and yet they persist in their unbelief. We cannot guarantee the eternal salvation of our relatives and friends. But what we must guard against is the possibility of being so preoccupied in ministering to others that we neglect our own family circle. Our own vineyard, in such cases, should have priority.